

**Insurance and Real Estate Committee Public Hearing
March 3, 2015**

**Testimony in support of
HB 6867, An Act Concerning Health Care Provider Network Adequacy**

Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Hartley, Representative Zoni, Senator Kelly and Representative Sampson and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Connecticut Chapter is urging the Insurance and Real Estate Committee to pass HB 6867, An Act Concerning Health Care Provider Network Adequacy.

Multiple sclerosis, an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system, interrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis. The progress, severity and specific symptoms of MS in any one person cannot yet be predicted, but advances in research and treatment are moving us closer to a world free of MS. Most people with MS are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, with at least two to three times more women than men being diagnosed with the disease.

There are over 6,000 individuals living with MS in Connecticut. Compared to the general population, even people with mild forms of MS can have extraordinary healthcare needs. Due to the significant variability in the MS population, people with MS require full access to a range of treatment options and specialists.

Section 4 of HB6867 identifies the importance of having providers who can serve people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is critical, however even with the ADA, there still can be significant challenges for individuals who utilize wheelchairs in terms of accessing exam tables and facilities. We often hear from members who can get into the door of an office, but who are not able to access an exam table because of its height. These individuals find that they are unable to transfer onto the table and there are little or no options for assistance in getting onto the table. Very few medical practices have exam tables that are height adjustable.

We request that there needs to be a provision to access "out-of-network care" at "in-network rates" especially for patients in need of care that is not accessible through participating providers without unreasonable delay.

In addition to accessibility, we believe that there are additional circumstances where people need to be able to obtain "out-of-network care" at "in-network rates" including if there is a lack of a subspecialist with the professional training, expertise and experience necessary to treat a rare condition or aggressive disease.

We urge the Insurance and Real Estate Committee to pass HB 6867, An Act Concerning Health Care Provider Network Adequacy.

Thank you.

Susan Raimondo
Senior Director, Advocacy and Programs

659 Tower Avenue., First Floor, Hartford, CT 06112-1269 tel+1 860 913 2550; fax+1 860 761 2466

www.ctfightsMS.org

Offices in Hartford and Norwalk

susan.raimondo@nmss.org

659 Tower Avenue., First Floor, Hartford, CT 06112-1269 tel+1 860 913 2550; fax+1 860 761 2466

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